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INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 0054
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0042
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0044

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000776

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG
ABUJA PLEASE PASS CHARGE HUME

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TAGS: PGOV PINR ASEC SU UN
SUBJECT: UNMIS STAFF IN KHARTOUM UNDER THREAT; PRONK ASKS
FOR US/UK SECURITY COOPERATION

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. ANDREW STEINFELD; REASONS: 1.4(B)
AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: UNMIS Staff in Khartoum are increasingly under threat, USRSG Jan Pronk told the U.S. and UK Charges on March 27. Two UN expatriate staff members were followed home several days ago, and other staffers have received threatening phone calls. Worse, approximately one month ago, one UN Sudanese staffer was abducted, blindfolded, and detained for several hours before she was released. Pronk does not believe the Government of Sudan is to blame for the incidents, though he does believe the Government has helped create a climate in which anti-foreign elements can flourish. UNMIS has already upgraded its security posture as a result of these incidents, but Pronk has now urged greater security and intelligence cooperation with the U.S. and UK missions in Khartoum. END SUMMARY.

UN Staff in Khartoum Threatened

¶2. (C) UNSRSG Jan Pronk told U.S. and British Charges on March 27 that he was increasingly concerned about the safety of UNMIS staff in Khartoum after several recent security incidents. On March 25, two expatriates on the UN staff were followed home from UN offices and questioned by unknown men about their identities and their work. The same day, a Sudanese UN staffer received an anonymous phone call asking where specific foreign staff members lived. Pronk said other international staff have recently received threatening phone calls traced to public phone booths around the city.

¶3. (C) More disturbingly, approximately one month ago, a Sudanese woman on the UNMIS staff was pushed into a car, blindfolded, and taken to a house somewhere in Khartoum. Though she was not harmed, Pronk said, she was told that she had to quit working for the UN. Her captors released her a few hours later, after again blindfolding her and dropping her on the street.

¶4. (C) Pronk does not think Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service is responsible for these incidents -- "that would be stupid," he noted -- but he does believe the Government of Sudan has created a climate that allows anti-foreign groups to flourish, beyond Government control. "Our staff is afraid -- our national staff is especially vulnerable, but our international staff is also concerned," Pronk said, noting that his staff includes several American and British citizens.

UNMIS Upgrades Security, Asks for US/UK Cooperation

¶ 15. (C) UNMIS has already raised its security procedures as a result of these incidents, and began daily radio and cell phone checks for all UNMIS staff on March 26. It also plans to adopt a lower profile in Khartoum, and replace its white land cruisers -- conspicuously marked "UN" -- with smaller, less obvious vehicles. Pronk also asked that UNMIS, the U.S. Embassy, and the British Embassy begin cooperating more closely on security issues and intelligence matters related to staff security. (Note: Pronk mentioned he had raised this issue several months ago with officials at both embassies, and understood the sensitivities involved; he did not plan to approach any other foreign missions for help, or share any information with them.) "Share what you want to share, either weekly or biweekly," Pronk suggested. "We don't need to know sources, but we do need to know more about the threat."

¶ 16. (C) COMMENT: RSO already consults periodically with UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS); we believe the British Embassy also has a similar program already in place. We will confer with the British about moving these consultations to a more regular, trilateral basis, as Pronk requested.

STEINFELD